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Sergeant-Major Gandhi: Indian Nationalism and Nonviolent "Martiality"

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*This article takes issue with recent accounts of the evolution of Gandhian ideas that have stressed his importance as a global theorist of principled nonviolence. It suggests that throughout his life Gandhi's writings display a preoccupation with ideas of martial courage and fearlessness; his stance might best be defined as one of nonviolent "martiality" rather than nonviolence per se. His overriding goal was not to proselytize for global "*ahimsa*" (nonviolence) but to shape the Indian people into a nonviolent army that could wrest freedom from the colonizers. It explains this concern for both nonviolence and martial attitudes by arguing that Gandhi's thought has to be reassessed and placed within several important contexts: the widespread global popularity of militarism before 1914; an influential intellectual critique of Western "materialist" values; Asian nationalist efforts to develop "indigenous" forms of mobilizational politics in their struggles against imperialism; and Indian thinking about caste (*varna*), which was central to Gandhi's thought and has generally been neglected in the literature. These contexts help us to understand Gandhi's complex and sometimes contradictory thinking on the issue of violence.*

> I have described the disarmament and consequent emasculation of a whole people as the blackest crime of the British. I have not the capacity for preaching universal non-violence for the country. . . . I am not advanced enough for the great task. I have yet anger within me. I have yet *davaita bhava* [*sic*] – duality – in me. (Gandhi 1958–84, 27:51.7.5., 25)

I

The sixtieth anniversary of Gandhi's death in 2008 occasioned much discussion of Gandhi's role as a global philosopher of nonviolence, and there will doubtless be more as the anniversary of his birth in 2019 approaches. This view of him is now well established, indeed dominant, in current academic literature, which sees him primarily as an important theorist and practitioner of nonviolence, a precursor of modern peace and environmentalist movements, and only very residually a nationalist. Parekh (2007, 568) has argued that though a patriot, Gandhi was hostile to nationalism. Hardiman, in his analysis and evaluation of Gandhi, regards his nationalism as secondary to his role as pacifist theorist and precursor of contemporary ecological protest movements: "The

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general thrust of Gandhi's injunction was that *ahimsa* (non-violence) involved qualities of respect and sympathy for the opponent, freedom from anger, and a desire for peace" (Hardiman 2003, 58, 245–47). Similarly, Lloyd Rudolph has presented him as almost hostile to the modern nation-state, and the originator of contemporary civil-society movements: "He has become the pre-eminent voice for civil society against the modern state. . . . NGOs, voluntary organisations and social movements count Gandhi as a progenitor whose ideas and methods provide inspiration, legitimacy and guidance" (Rudolph and Rudolph 2006, 34).

Yet despite these judgments, many of these writers acknowledge a certain peculiarity in Gandhi's comments on the nature and purpose of nonviolence. Hardiman (2003, 246–47) mentions that other leading pacifists had reservations about his inconsistency, fervent nationalism, and his activities as a recruiter for the British during the First World War. And Gandhi's grandson, Rajmohan Gandhi, in *The Good Boatman*, has commented at some length on the Mahatma's distinctly ambiguous attitude towards violence (R. Gandhi 1995, 10, 18, 28). It is well known that he was a fervent supporter of the British Empire and its wars up to 1919, and that he called for mass Indian enlistment in the British army during the First World War. More perplexing has been his oft-cited, though little analyzed, authorization of violence in his famous "Do or Die" speech at the launch of the 1942 Quit India movement against the British Raj.

One way of understanding these contradictions has been to suggest that there were two distinct phases in Gandhi's ideology of resistance. From the 1890s to about 1906 he was moderate reformer with pro-imperial sympathies, who favored legally authorized forms of protest, such as lobbying and petitioning. But around 1906, troubled by the Bambata War (according to his *Autobiography*) and by intensified racism in South Africa, he became more radical and adopted a full-blown theory of nonviolent civil disobedience from 1908 onwards. His Quit India "Do or Die" speech of 1942 and other pro-violence comments are thus dismissed as aberrations produced by wartime exigencies (Arnold 2001, 211; Copley 1987, 92).

Others have been more willing to engage with the ambiguity in Gandhi's thinking on violence throughout his life, but have seen it as the consequence of his pragmatism. For Gene Sharp, Gandhi was a convinced advocate of nonviolence, but saw it as a strategic choice (Sharp 1979, 26–38). Meanwhile, for Devji, Gandhi was less a moralist opposed to violence than a figure who saw nonviolence as a strategy designed to provoke violence in enemies, thus allowing Indians to practice a politics of self-sacrifice (Devji 2012, 3, 6).

Both interpretations have something to them: there was a shift in Gandhi's views around 1906–8, though, as I will show, it is not best understood as one from legalism to civil disobedience and principled nonviolence. Also, Gandhi did indeed often see nonviolence strategically. Even so, Gandhi is not best seen as a straightforward pragmatist, simply calculating the best way of fighting the British; there was a good deal of consistency to his thought, both before and after 1907–8. For what all of these interpretations neglect is Gandhi's preoccupation, evident throughout his life, with military affairs: with the values particularly associated with warriors and soldiers, such as courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice; and with military-style organization. In fact, this striking feature of his thought has attracted remarkably little historiographical attention. It would be an exaggeration to label this disposition "militarism"—indeed, Gandhi was a strong critic of militarism, if it is defined as an ideology seeking the armed militarization of all

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aspects of society in order to pursue aggressive foreign expansion. But the less bellicose term "martiality"—the use of a military or quasi-military mobilization of a disciplined mass force in pursuit of political goals—does describe both of the supposedly distinct periods of his thought, and suggests that one of his major objectives was to shape the Indian people into a nonviolent *army*.

A great deal of Western commentary, therefore, has misunderstood Gandhi. This is partly because his iconic status has been useful in legitimizing certain contemporary methods and modes of politics, and also partly because historians have sought to protect Gandhi's name from appropriation by contemporary Hindu nationalists. However, to understand Gandhi properly one needs to put contemporary preoccupations aside and place his thought in four contexts: a global fashion for militarism in the decades before World War I; an influential Romantic critique of modern civilization for its materialism and neglect of the spiritual; an Asian anti-imperial nationalism that sought to reconcile modern forms of mobilizational politics with "indigenous" cultures; and a more local Indian and South African Indian political culture that stressed the importance of caste (*varna*). In these contexts, Gandhi emerges less as a universalizing pacifist, or even a consistent opponent of violence, than as a figure who was attempting to construct a nonviolent but still martial form of nationalism, likely to resonate with many Indians and have a chance of success against a militarily superior West.

II

The world of Gandhi's childhood and youth was, as most historians agree, one in which valorization of warriors and the military was a striking feature. After 1870, intense competition between European states and Japan to build and expand their empires gave aristocratic military elites in Europe and Asia enhanced power and prestige. As Bayly (2004, 397) has argued, "the annexation to itself of a huge extra-European hinterland which could only be governed by force and conservatism" gave new life to military aristocracies in Europe between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and World War I. This applied equally in much of the non-European world (Waldron 1991), and this glorification of the military was especially pronounced in imperial India.

After the Rebellion of 1857, the British began to turn away from strategies of legal, bureaucratic, and institutional reformism, which had favored India's traditional administrative service-class (usually of *brahmin* caste origin), towards a politics that empowered land-controlling warrior groups (Metcalf 1997, 11–12, 75–80). This growing preference for warrior-aristocrats as political allies was reinforced by what Streets (2004, 92–93) has termed the Raj's "obsession with military preparedness" after the first Russian war-scare of 1870. India's own aristocratic "princes" (usually from the *kshatriya* or warrior caste) were the beneficiaries of this shift. Gandhi's family, though merchant (*vaisya*) caste by origin, was closely associated with this culture; his father and grandfather had been chief ministers (*diwans*) in the tiny state of Porbandar, where Gandhi was born, and during his childhood and youth his father became *diwan* of the larger state of Rajkot.

The promotion of military culture in the India of Gandhi's youth received pseudo-scientific ballast from the then popular theories of race hierarchy, and the

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interplay of militarism and race shaped the influential imperial notion of "martial races." According to this view, only certain Indian groups—Rajputs, Sikhs, Jats, Pathans, and Gurkhas—were "manly" enough for military service; the rest, especially high-caste non-*kshatriyas*, were dubbed "effeminate." Martial race theory drove military recruitment from 1885 onwards, and by 1914 the "martial races" accounted for 75 percent of the British Indian army, while the policy itself had achieved the status of official doctrine (Streets 2004, 100).

Militarism was also a striking feature of the Indian press, which proudly hailed the Indian Army's deployment as an "Imperial fire brigade" in Abyssinia, Burma, China, Persia, and Egypt and lobbied vigorously for Indian troops to be sent to South Africa during the Boer War (1899–1902) to prove their loyalty and prowess (Omissi 2002, 216). Being a soldier was associated with high status and, sometimes, real political influence (Chandramohan 2000, 155–56), and unsurprisingly the "non-martial" higher castes increasingly challenged and sought "militarization" themselves. Sinha (1995, 76–78) has detailed the case of high-caste "native gentlemen" in Bengal who lobbied unsuccessfully to raise a Native Volunteer Force during the Russian war-scare of 1895. A decade later, warrior values were widespread among young high-caste men; during the protests over the partition of Bengal, many joined secret revolutionary societies committed to ridding India of the British by force (Southard 1980, 368–69), and in Maharashtra, Congress leader Tilak sought to clothe the high-caste nationalist movement in the garb of martial traditions, invoking the warrior Chitpavan *brahmins* and the soldier-king Shivaji (Masselos 1970, 82). By 1910, even the ranks of orthodox high-caste Hinduism had been penetrated by martial fervor. The plans for the Hindu University at Banaras included provision for systematic physical training, including wrestling, at the behest of its orthodox and conservative Hindu founder, Madan Mohan Malaviya (Watt 1997, 367–68).

It is in this context that one has to understand Gandhi's early writings and his evident enthusiasm for all things martial. As a young man Gandhi was, by his own admission, a passionate nationalist who dreamed of making himself the equal of powerful Westerners. His development followed the typical trajectory of many young Asian men encountering the problem of Western colonial dominance. This tended to involve close emulation of practices and mores of the West—especially militarism—as the best means of developing national strength. His early writings make clear his fascination with the West's traditions of military power. He read volumes of military history spanning the Spartans, the Wars of the Roses, the Crimean War, the Boer War, the Franco-German War, and the British Afghan campaigns (Gandhi 1958–84, 48:17.11.31., 307, 344). And throughout his life he would have recourse to these examples to illustrate his own political and mobilizational practices (13: October 1916, 295–96).

He was also interested in emulating military culture at the personal level, most famously in his early experiments with meat-eating, a practice—strongly associated with *kshatriya* and soldierly values—that was deemed status-lowering by most *brahmins* and *vaisyas*. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi recalled that at school a friend had encouraged him to experiment with meat-eating, arguing: "We are a weak people because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us because they are meat-eaters. . . . Try, and see what strength it gives" (Gandhi [1927] 1982, 34). Gandhi agreed to the experiment, reasoning, "I was a coward. I used to be haunted by the fear of thieves,

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ghosts, and serpents . . . and I felt ashamed of myself." He also quoted local doggerel in explanation:

> Behold the mighty Englishman
> He rules the Indian small,
> Because being a meat-eater
> He is five cubits tall.

Gandhi reports that he began to think that meat-eating "would make me strong and daring. . . . If the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome" (34–35).

However, during his studies in England, he concluded, after reading Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, that vegetarianism was equally conducive to physical strength and martial virtue. And at the same time he began to reassess his view of Indian and Western culture. At the prompting of theosophists, he read ancient Indian texts, and in South Africa, where he worked as a lawyer for the growing Indian mercantile community from 1893 to 1915, he became familiar, through the work of Ruskin and Tolstoy, with Western Romantic critiques of modern individualism and industrialism (Hyslop 2011, 33, 41–42).

Even so, in his politics, he maintained an essentially pro-British liberalism, seeking not Indian independence per se, but the equal treatment of educated Indians as loyal subjects of the British Empire (Hyslop 2011, 36–37). And between 1893 and 1906, he sought to improve the rights of Indians in South Africa with petitions, lobbying in Cape Town and London, and penning articles intended to rally and educate Indians, and to prove their worthiness for inclusion in the *Pax Britannica* as equal citizens (Brown 1989, 7–74). But Gandhi's remained a liberalism permeated with militaristic values; he was convinced that Indians would only achieve parity of treatment with Europeans if they could demonstrate military values of courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice.

This was the lesson he drew from Japan's rise to global prominence in 1904–5. Gandhi was delighted at Japan's military triumph over Russia at the Battle of Mukden which, he assured his readers, "bids fair to be considered the greatest [battle] in all ancient and modern History" (Gandhi 1958–84, 4:11.3.05., 374). He wrote several articles enquiring into the source of Japan's success, and suggested that it derived, in part, from its creative emulation of the West, especially of Britain (5:2.9.05., 57–58). But Japan was now surpassing even Britain, owing to the superior bravery and patriotism of its generals and admirals, its ability to instill military loyalty through a scheme of oaths (3:2.10.05., 57), and its martial arts, especially jujitsu (3:24.4.05., 352). Crucially, also, the Japanese subordinated mundane concern with individual material wealth to martial valor (3:24.6.05., 475).

Indians, Gandhi urged, needed to learn lessons from the Japanese, and in his 1907 article "Will Indians Be Slaves?" he mused on the contrast between Japan's supposed refusal to tolerate the humiliation of Japanese in America (and willingness to avenge it with military force) with Indians' indifference to the maltreatment of their emigrant workers (6:11.5.07., 456–57). "Though Japan," he noted, "wears a yellow skin," she now enjoyed a friendship of equals with the British. The respect of the British had

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been earned by the "slap in the face" to Russia delivered by the Japanese army and navy (6:11.5.07., 457).

For Gandhi the Boer War (1899–1902) provided a fine opportunity to associate Indians with military valor, for the commander-in-chief of the British forces was General Roberts, erstwhile supremo of the Indian Army. In March and December 1900, Gandhi sent telegrams of congratulations to Roberts for battle victories (3:15.3.1900 and 6.12.1900., 136, 170), and in 1904 he penned an encomium presented to Lord Roberts by a delegation of grateful Indians: "It is a matter of no small pride to us that it is India which has given the Empire its greatest soldier of the present times, in whom are combined the sternness of a soldier and the gentleness of a godly man" (4:19.11.04., 293–94).

The Boer War and the Bambata War of 1906 were opportunities, Gandhi believed, for Indians to finally achieve equality and respect by joining an Indian Volunteer Force in South Africa, earning the right to equal citizenship by joining the British forces as front-line soldiers (3:29.10.1899., 113–14). In 1906, he demanded that the British imperial state amend the Natal Firearms Act and give Indians weapons training. To Indians themselves he pointed out the benefits consequent upon volunteering: "Indians now have a splendid opportunity for showing that they are capable of appreciating the duties of citizenship. . . . Should they be assigned a permanent part in the militia, there will remain no ground for the European complaint that Europeans alone have to bear the brunt of colonial defence" (5:9.6.06., 353).

He petitioned the British government to realize "what a reserve force is being wasted," and that given proper military training in "natural warfare" Indians would make a "very fine volunteer corps . . . second to none in Natal in smartness and efficiency, not only in peace but in actual service also" (5:18.11.05., 134).

However, the British refused to allow the formation of an Indian volunteer force, and Gandhi had to be content with a volunteer ambulance corps instead (in 1899 and 1906). This was, naturally, a great disappointment, as he wrote in June 1906:

> One who enlists is much respected. People love him and praise him calling him a civilian soldier. . . . For fifteen years the whites here have accused the Indians that, if it came to giving one's life in defence of Natal, they would desert their posts and flee home. . . . There is but one way to display [bravery] – the way of action. . . . We should be ever ready for war if we wish to live happily and respectedly [*sic*] in Natal. (5:11.6.06., 361–66)

Gandhi made the best of his Indian ambulance corps, determined that its members would display the disciplined and coordinated action of active soldiers:

> It was wonderful to see how, with clockwork regularity over 15,000 men with heavy artillery and transport broke camp and marched off leaving behind nothing but empty tins and broken cases. . . . The drill consisted of training the bearers how to lift the wounded. . . . Thus fitted . . . more or less for military discipline it did not find it difficult when the orders were received. (3:27.1.1900., 138)

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Throughout this period, Gandhi wrote several articles extolling India's military contribution to the British Empire (3:17.6.05., 469), and praising the bravery of Indian soldiers. Particularly striking was his article of June 1904, "Sepoy Bravery," which recounted the tale of an Indian soldier who stood firm during a skirmish in Tibet while his British confreres fled the field:

> The surging mass of fanatics – they were one hundred strong – then swept down upon the devoted sepoy, who with heroic courage, stuck to his post, calmly aiming at the Tibetans. He had succeeded in shooting five of the enemy when he was cut down by a swordsman. . . . What Victoria Cross could commemorate the bravery of the solitary sepoy, and how many deeds often remain unrecorded? . . . There has hardly been during the last sixty years a British war in which the Indian soldier has not taken an honourable part, whether as an armed man, or whether merely as a coolie-bearer, as in the late Boer War. In the words of Tennyson:
>
> 'Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do or die.' (4:18.6.04., 240)

And it was to these lines of Tennyson that Gandhi returned repeatedly, most notably nearly forty years later when he notoriously, if ambiguously, appeared to authorize the use of violence in launching the Quit India Campaign.

III

During his early years in South Africa, therefore, Gandhi followed a strategy of Westernizing and even militarizing the Indian community; indeed, he believed the two went together (Gandhi 1958–84, 7:1.6.07., 6–7). Such a "self-strengthening" approach was common among Asian nationalists of the era, in China as well as India (Fairbank and Liu 1980, 203–73; Southard 1980, 360–69). However, starting in 1906–7 the appeasing attitude adopted by the British Imperial government to the increasingly racist policies of the Boer government resulted in Gandhi's sharp and sudden disenchantment with this Westernizing approach. Equally frustrating was the weak response of many Indians (as Gandhi saw it) to this discrimination.

These twin disillusionments provoked a complex reaction involving a dramatic revalorization of "traditional" Indian culture and a virtually outright rejection of the West. Its "materialism" was denounced; its lack of "soul" and "morality"—manifested in its individualism, competitiveness, and frequent recourse to violence—was deplored. And in its place Gandhi invoked the supposedly more "spiritual" heritage of the East, which was, he argued, more conducive to a moral and powerful martiality. Though this critique drew on both Eastern and Western sources, he became more specifically interested in Hindu social thought, and especially the ancient Indian concept of *varna*, an approach which, according to Gandhi, held that society should be divided into functional occupational groups or *varnas*, each with its own *dharma* (duty). *Brahmins* should teach; *kshatriyas* should protect (through force if need be); *vaisyas* should confine themselves to mercantile, farming, and artisanal tasks; and *sudras* should serve. This embrace of

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Asian and specifically Hindu culture led Gandhi to two not entirely compatible conclusions: First, that violence was Western and morally wrong. Second, that violence as a political strategy in India was problematic, less because it was immoral per se than because it was impractical, as only a small group of Indians—the *kshatriyas*—were accustomed to its deployment. Gandhi defended both arguments in the course of his life. But even so, his qualified rejection of violence did lead to an abandonment of his earlier enthusiasm for the military and instead the adoption of a nonviolent "martiality," reconciling non-Western "spirit" and Hindu *varna*.

After the British Imperial government's victory in the Boer War, Gandhi believed that it would act to curb the discriminatory policies of the Boers and confer equal rights on "educated" Indians. That the newly elected British Liberal government of 1906 would do nothing to challenge policies forcing Indians to register for residency and fingerprinting was a great shock (Hyslop 2011, 43–46). Initially it was hoped that lobbying in London would persuade the government to withdraw this legislation, but when this failed Gandhi and others decided to launch a campaign of peaceful civil disobedience and persuade Indians to refuse to register. This campaign of passive resistance seems to have been suggested by one of Gandhi's Muslim co-leaders (Hyslop 2011, 44). Gandhi himself was willing to abandon his militarism, but still caviled at the implication of weakness carried in the term. As he recalled in his *Autobiography*: "When in a meeting of Europeans I found that the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly constructed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak. . . . It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their strength" (Gandhi [1927] 1982, 291–92). Gandhi chose the term *satyagraha*, literally "holding firm to truth," which he glossed initially as "firmness in truth," but later as "soul-strength" or "soul-force" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:2.9.17., 517).

In part, Gandhi's rejection of conventional militarism derived from his dramatic loss of faith in the British. As late as June 1907, he argued that the best strategy for Indians was the adoption of a "brave" British culture:

> Whatever the motives of the British in coming to India, we have much to learn from them. They are a brave and considerate people. . . . They are a powerful nation, and India enjoys not a little protection under them. . . . Public spirit is not likely to grow amongst us without western education and contact with the west. . . . The British colonies are what they are not because the people are white, but because they are brave and would take offence if their rights were not granted. (Gandhi 1958–84, 7:1.6.07., 6–7)

But by May 1908, in a furious speech to the Natal YMCA, his position had undergone a remarkable reversal:

> What is the difference between eastern and western civilization. . . . It appears that western civilization is destructive, eastern civilization is constructive. Western civilization is centrifugal and eastern civilization is centripetal. Western civilization is therefore naturally disruptive, whereas eastern civilization combines. I believe that western civilization is without a goal, eastern civilization has always had a goal before it. (8:6.6.08., 242)

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The speech was prompted in part by British High Commissioner Lord Selborne, sent out to calm Boer-Indian relations, who had suggested that "Asiatics" were a "menace to the empire" (8:18.5.08., 242), and this unexpected British acceptance of escalating racism produced in Gandhi a radical reassessment of Western and Indian culture. Gandhi had already read Romantic critiques of capitalist and individualist culture in the name of a spiritual anti-materialism by Western writers. But he had applied these ideas only in his ashrams (religious communities) and not as models for entire societies. However, in 1907 and 1908, he read or reread a number of Eastern and Western texts —such as Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (which he translated as *Sarvodaya*), *The Way of the Buddha*, *The Koran*, Washington Irving's *History of the Caliphs*, Sa'di's *Gulistan*, works by the Sufi mystic Rumi, the *Upanishads*, the *Manusmriti*, and the *Patanjali - Yoga darshan*—and claimed to see in them an alternative, non-Western path for India reliant on spiritual values (7:15.6.07., 43–44 and 22.6.07., 55–56; 9:5.6.09., 241). Meanwhile, the West's obsession with the physical and material was given as the reason for its competitiveness and violence:

> From the present civilization, or rather from Western civilization, there flow two propositions which have become almost maxims to live by. . . . They are that 'might is right' and 'survival of the fittest' . . . [meaning] that physical might is right, that physical strength is right and supreme. Some of them have also combined intellectual strength with physical strength, but I would replace these with heart strength, and I say that nobody with mere physical might and intellectual might can ever enjoy that strength that can proceed from the heart. (8:6.6.08., 242)

Gandhi now argued that societies reliant on materialism or "body-force" were doomed, a theme he first broached in an essay on Darwin in February 1907: "Darwin shows . . . that moral strength is even superior to physical and intellectual strength. . . . The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely immoral and they are now completely extinct. We can see even today how races with no morality are steadily declining" (6:5.2.07., 317).

Emulation of the West was now seen as a source of weakness, not strength. Japan would, Gandhi hypothesized, soon go the way of all decadent powers. It was a nation built on purely material power at the expense of its spiritual heritage, and had become intoxicated by power since its defeat of the Russians (9:8.1.10., 424); its imperialistic pretensions in Korea were evidence of this corruption by Western values (9:c.18.9.09., 424–25). By comparison, his own campaign in South Africa surpassed Japan's trouncing of Russia and proved that "the sword of Satyagraha is far superior to the steel sword" (8:27.6.08., 324). India with its ancient civilization as guide could avoid the fate of Japan.

This new philosophy found its fullest exposition in *Hind Swaraj*, a harsh critique of all aspects of Western (now dubbed "modern") civilization. Now the very characteristics of modern Western culture Gandhi had earlier praised—modern science and technology, parliamentary democracy, industrialism, and Western education—were all decried. Yet in *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi insisted that none of these phenomena should be opposed by violent force. Indeed, the book is constructed as a Platonic dialogue between "editor," Gandhi, and "reader," an imaginary young votary of terrorism. To adopt violence, Gandhi warns, is to fall prey to the most corrosive aspect of materialist Western

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culture: the notion that "body-force" is indispensable to the acquisition of national independence and self-respect. To adopt violent means is, in effect, to become Western and materialist; it would merely lead to *Englistan*, not Indian self-rule (Gandhi [1909] 1997, 28).

However, for Gandhi the turn to nonviolence was not just rooted in an embrace of non-Western spirituality. He also came to argue that it accorded with the specifically Hindu concept of *varna*. According to Gandhi, India was unsuited to the politics of violence because, unlike the West, only one section of the population—the *kshatriya* caste—could legitimately employ physical force. It followed that the only proper and practical method for the Indian people as a whole was nonviolence.

It took some time for Gandhi to integrate *varna* into his worldview. In South Africa, many of those he was seeking to mobilize were Muslims, and he rarely used Hindu ideas and language in his rhetoric. And while he did reread the *Bhagavad Gita*, a text which lays great stress on *varna dharma*, while in prison in 1908, he did not fully incorporate it into his ideas until his return to India in 1915. However, even before his return to India it is clear that Gandhi shared conventional ideas of the cultures and practices of caste, accepting that some caste and religious groups were unsuited to military activity, writing in 1907: "There is an old saying that those who lose their freedom lose half their virtues. Therefore, come forward to fight. . . . Fearless Rajputs, Sikhs, Pathans. Gurkhas, patriotic Marathas and Bengalees, spirited Parsees and brave Mahomedans, and last, you mild Jains and patient Hindus. . . . March ahead" (Gandhi 1958–84, 7:10.8.07., 158). Gandhi had also encountered the practical problem of mobilizing Indian commercial groups (both Hindu and Muslim) in South Africa against the British—communities that were, he worried, too concerned with profit to act heroically (5:23.6.06., 361–62).

For Indian businessmen, participation in the 1907 campaign against government registration meant risking the loss of their trading licenses, and by late 1907 many traders had registered in order to safeguard their businesses (Swan 1985, 120–22). Gandhi wrote a series of articles exhorting the community to be more warrior-like. "What Should the Brave Do?" reminded its readers: "Those rushing to the battlefield do not think of what will happen to their family or business. . . . When the Boers crossed swords with the mighty British, the late Mr Kruger did not think of his family and his wealth" (Gandhi 1958–84, 7:1.6.07., 2–3). Similarly, in October, in "Poor but Brave Indians" he castigated merchants for their lack of heroism in comparison to poorer Indians "willing to give up their jobs rather than submit to the obnoxious law" (7:5.10.07., 265).

And yet Gandhi also implicitly accepted that businessmen were unlikely to embrace a warrior's life, because they adhered to a merchant caste *dharma* that forbade violence. In one article, he invited Indian businessmen to compare themselves to Moorish spearmen, galloping headlong into a storm of French bullets, but noted that with civil disobedience "no one has to die. No one has to kill. Only money is to be sacrificed" (7:31.8.07., 203).

Gandhi, therefore, argued that all castes, including merchants, could practice a form of heroic politics, whether violent or nonviolent, and he developed it in his loose translation of John Ruskin's tract "Unto This Last" (*Sarvodaya*), published between May and August 1908. He endorsed Ruskin's defense of a non-capitalist, non-competitive

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society, which, echoing the *varna* system, was divided into functional groups, and he insisted that each caste was obliged to show a martial heroism in its own way:

> It is the duty of each on due occasion to die for the people. The soldier must be prepared to die at his post of duty. . . . During a plague or epidemic the physician must not run away. . . . The priest must lead the people from error to truth even if they should kill him for it [Socrates was Gandhi's example here]. The lawyer must ensure, even at the cost to his own life, that justice prevails. (8:6.6.08., 281–82)

This *varna*-inspired, functionalist vision of society became much more explicit when Gandhi returned to India; from that time on he began to use the terms *varnashram* ("*ashrama*" meaning appropriate behavior for one's stage of life) and *varna dharma*. This was not surprising, as questions of caste, and especially *kshatriya* status, played a central role in Indian politics at the time. Movements among *sudra* peasant groups to be recognized as higher-status *kshatriyas* had become increasingly common across north India (Pinch 1996, 90–136). Meanwhile, in Maharashtra, the region bordering Gandhi's homeland in Gujarat, the "untouchable" Mahar community campaigned successfully to be classified as a "martial" caste in recognition of their historical role as warriors, much to the chagrin of their caste "superiors" (Constable 2001, 455–59). Gandhi consistently defended caste distinctions, and he objected to these campaigns (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:20.5.15., 94). There was no need, he argued, for the peasantry to seek membership of the warrior caste, because they could achieve heroic status nonviolently: "Non-violent non-cooperation is a way of cultivating *kshatriya* values [which] have wholly disappeared from India and the aim of non-violent non-cooperation is to revive it" (20:1.5.21., 52). Gandhi insisted that very few could (by virtue of their *dharma*) become violent warriors, and so the only way forward was *satyagraha*: "So long as this institution of *varnashram* exists in India, everyone cannot bear arms here. . . . So long as this custom prevails, it is vain for us to aspire to equality with the West in force of arms" (13:2.9.17., 522).

While in India, Gandhi developed these arguments and came to formulate a coherent defense of *satyagraha* founded on India's peculiar social and religious context. Indian attitudes towards violence were, he insisted, entirely different from those of Europe, because while armies had existed in India, they were not part of "the normal course of Indian life," and the "masses were untouched by warlike spirit" (26:9.4.25., 486), unlike Europe, where "the people have gained their freedom by the violent method, the people were more or less trained in the use of arms. . . . [They] gained their freedom by being able to use greater violence than the enthroned authority" (46:16.4.31., 1–3). Thus it would take too long to convert the masses to revolutionary violence, and seeking to do so would only bring division, not unity: "They [the terrorists] can and do applaud wholeheartedly the action of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. . . . But do they realize with me that India is not like Turkey or Ireland or Russia and that revolutionary activity is suicidal at this stage of the country's life, if not for all time in a country so vast, so hopelessly divided?" (46:23.4.31., 29–31).

These arguments were, of course, pragmatic, but Gandhi did not believe that the *varna* system, and the nonviolence it necessitated, were a second best; they were essential to India and its greatness. As he explained in his 1917 article "What Is *Satyagraha*":

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> It is certain that India cannot rival Britain or Europe in force. The British worship the war-god and they can all become arms bearers; hundreds of millions of Indians cannot bear arms. The religion of non-violence is their own . . . the way of *varnashrama*. . . . So long as *varnashrama* exists here everyone cannot bear arms. . . . The highest place is Brahmana – soul-force. (13:2.9.17., 520)

IV

If one understands the origins of *satyagraha* in Gandhi's desire to reconcile militaristic values with his understanding of spiritual strength, and the source of that strength in India's adherence to the *varna* system, it becomes easier to understand the highly martial inflection of Gandhi's discussions of the concept in his post-South African writings.

From the very beginning of the movement, the concept of *satyagraha* was chosen to show that nonviolent resistance should be associated with a quasi-military activity. "Passive resistance," he argued in 1917, did not capture the active and forceful practice he had in mind. *Satyagraha* was a form of organized "soul strength" intended to compete with and defeat organized "armed strength" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:2.9.17., 517). And, sensitive to criticisms that *satyagraha* was a cowardly weapon of the weak, he offered, in *Hind Swaraj* and elsewhere, several examples of conventional warriors, including Tolstoy and the Buddha, who had eschewed violence for nonviolence, not from weakness, but rather because it was a superior force (Gandhi [1909] 1997, 88–99). So, in his article "Who Can Offer *Satyagraha*?," reflecting on the recent campaign in the Transvaal, he dwelt at length on the essentially martial nature of his method. *Satyagrahis* were compared with an army in the field wielding power "more potent than physical strength" (Gandhi 1986, 3:29.5.09., 35–39). *Satyagrahis* had, he insisted, been required to train, and to give up their families and all the comforts of life. This was only natural, for what they were doing was directly comparable to soldiering:

> It is worthwhile to bear in mind that many of these things have to be sacrificed even if physical force is resorted to. One is obliged to suffer hunger and thirst, to bear heat and cold, to sacrifice family bonds, to put up with pecuniary loss. . . . If we learn the use of the weapon of *satyagraha*, we can employ it to overcome all hardships. (3:29.5.09., 35–39)

Such military metaphors were constantly employed by Gandhi to explain his ideas and actions—something which scholars have largely ignored. He likened himself to a general commanding "the different castes" as "so many divisions of an army"; "if it becomes necessary to raise an army for war, we have already as many battalions as there are communities" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:16.2.16., 307). On the eve of one of his first experimental campaigns in India in 1918, he cautioned his "volunteers" to remember that they were fighting a "holy war" (Gandhi 1986, 3:17.4.18., 54). And his descriptions of the South African *satyagrahis* offered special praise to the martial characteristics of the volunteers: "They were disciplined soldiers. Though I was torn from them they did not disperse or turn back. They marched on to their destination" (3:4.7.21., 94). Similarly, in a speech in Geneva in 1931, he overtly expressed his admiration for the martial: "If

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you give up the profession of soldiery," he insisted, "you will miss the education you receive in service and sacrifice." Workers, merchants, and lawyers were all, at times, exhorted to "assimilate all the noble qualities of soldiery" (Gandhi 1958–84, 46:9.12.31., 419). On another occasion, he likened his nonviolent volunteers to an ant army: "Millions of ants can kill an elephant by together attacking it at a vulnerable place," he insisted. But this was not because of their numbers, but "their sense of solidarity, consciousness of oneness of spirit in spite of the diversity of bodies, in other words, their spirit force, makes them irresistible" (Gandhi 1986, 3:10.11.21., 97). Similarly he declared, "A body of civil resisters is . . . like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of the want of excitement" (3:14.11.29., 26). Immediately after World War II, he even praised a non-metaphorical army, Subhas Bose's Indian National Army, which had collaborated with the Japanese: "The hypnotism of the Indian National Army has cast its spell on us," he announced; its lesson of "self-sacrifice, unity irrespective of class and community, and discipline" was inspiring, and *satyagrahis* would all be wise to "copy this trinity of virtues" (2:15.2.46., 373).

However, unlike the Indian National Army, which had been a limited force composed largely of captured Indian soldiers, Gandhi envisaged a mass volunteer army:

> I believe that every man and woman should learn the art of self-defence. This is done though arms in the West. Every adult man is conscripted for army training. . . . The training for *satyagraha* is meant for all. . . . It follows that shop-keepers, traders, mill-hands, labourers, farmers, clerks, in short everyone ought to consider it his duty to get the necessary training. (3:17.3.46., 82–83)

As commander of this mass army, Gandhi continued to take an interest in theories of leadership. As a young man, he had absorbed Carlyle's *On Heroes and Heroism*, and while he was deeply impressed by spiritual and ethical exemplars, such as Jesus, Mohammed, and Socrates, he also studied military role models, such as Oliver Cromwell, Nelson, and General Tojo (2:123). But it was the fallen Victorian hero of Khartoum, General Gordon, the "mighty warrior of the British Empire," who seems to have been an especial favorite. Gandhi was much taken with a statue of Gordon he saw in London, in which the general was shown carrying not a gun, but a simple baton:

> There is a statue erected . . . in the memory of the late General Gordon. The sculptor does not put a sword in his hands, he puts only a stick. . . . If I were born a sculptor . . . I would not have put even a stick in the hands of General Gordon, but I would have pictured him as one with folded arms, with his chest put forward, in all humility telling the world: "Come, all of you, who want to throw your darts, here is General Gordon to receive them without flinching, without retaliation." That is my ideal of a soldier. (Gandhi 1958–84, 25:4.8.25., 21)

Clearly the notion of dying in the field, the ultimate leadership by example, explains his preference for Gordon: "For me there is no laying down arms. I cannot do so. I am trying to be the warrior of my description and . . . such a warrior can fight single-handed" (Gandhi 1986, 2:17.6.39., 371). But in many ways Gandhi was a more conventional

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general too. During the two mass *satyagraha* campaigns of 1920–22 and 1930–32, he toured India like a field-marshal inspecting his troops, establishing protocols of engagement and also retreating periodically to consider tactics. As he explained when pushed to come up with a response to World War II:

> An able general always gives battle in his own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative. . . . In a *Satyagraha* campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, e.g., whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organize non-violent strength . . . are determined according to the exigencies of the situation. (3:27.5.39., 79)

His views on organization were also reminiscent of military ones. "*Satyagraha* brigades," he explained, "can be organized in every village and in every block of buildings in the cities" (Gandhi 1986, 3:27.5.39., 79). These nonviolent armies would have their own kind of organization, training, equipment, and rules of conduct; they must also emulate a real army by submitting themselves to the discipline of leadership and organization (3:20.5.20., 5). Gandhi himself stressed the similarities between the preliminary training of an army and of his volunteers: "discipline, drill, singing in chorus, flag-hoisting, signalling and the like" (2:12.5.46., 449). And he would chastise those who had "become used to laxity" and who found it "irksome to conform to . . . unexciting rules of preparation." Training was absolutely the most essential prerequisite, "necessary stages which require a lot of plodding" (3:8.4.39., 114). For, "just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence," he argued, "so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence" (2:31.8.40., 338).

Gandhi saw his volunteers as captains whose role was to train the foot soldiers of *satyagraha*, who took oaths of obedience and nonviolence akin to those sworn by the Japanese officers he so admired. Moreover, his various programs and forms of nonviolent action were intended to mimic drilling, and to inculcate self-discipline. The *khadi* (homespun cotton) campaign, for example, was likened to a form of mass discipline and training: "I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting-strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful *khadi* work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-cooperation" (3:17.10.35., 597). The same was true of his welfare work: "Constructive work is for [the *satyagrahi*] what arms are for the violent man" (2:18.1.42., 341). And although volunteers were always free to leave their units, once they joined they were supposed to observe strict obedience to their leaders, and not to question their strategy. Again, to justify this Gandhi turned to military conventions: "A soldier of an army does not know the whole of military science; so also does a *satyagrahi* not know the whole science of *satyagraha*. It is enough if he trusts his commander" (2:18.1.42., 341). In "Some Rules of *Satyagraha*," he outlined how volunteer units should behave: they had to obey all orders "issued by the leader of the corps," even if they appeared "insulting, inimical or foolish" (3:23.2.30., 71).

Other protocols of engagement issued for volunteers laid out strict rules for deployment and behavior in the field. There must be no raw recruits at big demonstrations, and only the most experienced should be at the head; volunteers should always carry a general instructions book; and at the beginning of all demonstrations there should be a review of

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volunteers by their "commander." In very crowded situations, volunteers were enjoined not to bunch together; they should, the instructions insisted, be posted at different points in the crowd and should learn "flag and whistle signalling in order to pass instructions from one to another" (3:8.9.20., 150–51). If captured they must behave according to the protocols of prisoners of war: "I have often likened *satyagrahis* to prisoners of war. . . . If we act as such, we shall soon command respect. We must make the prisons as neutral institutions in which we may . . . operate to a certain extent" (3:5.6.27., 67).

However, Gandhi's vision of *satyagraha* was not merely a version of militarism without the violence. It combined notions of conventional military organization and discipline with principles of spiritual discipline adapted from Indian religious traditions. These consisted, principally, of the observance of very strict physical austerities, or "*tapasya*," as he called it. "*Ahimsa* [nonviolence]" was, he said, "the most soldierly of soldierly virtues," but also required religious piety cultivated through extreme discipline of the body. For, he observed, though the Westerners also trained their bodies, and indeed he complimented them for their cultivation of "body development," he also noted that because it was motivated by either violence or competition (i.e., sport), rather than based "around belief," it was ultimately of no real help to them in developing real power (Gandhi 1958–84, 32:28.10.26., 344). *Satyagrahis* should train their bodies through strict religious austerities by taking vows of celibacy, control of the palate (abstinence from alcohol and strict vegetarianism), and the determination to avoid "overstimulation" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:16.2.16., 295). Through these techniques of spiritual training they would develop and learn to deploy "*daivi sampad*" or godlike qualities—crucial to the successful outcome of *ahimsa*. Properly cultivated, *daivi sampad* would always triumph over the "*asuri sampad*," or demonic qualities, deployed by conventional soldiers (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:2.9.17., 518–19). The most powerful example of *daivi sampad* was the fast, described by Gandhi as "the last weapon in the armoury of the votary of non-violence" (Gandhi 1986, 3:21.12.47., 208), and one that he only really regarded himself as qualified to use.

At times. Gandhi came close to claiming almost magical powers for *satyagraha*, comparing it to various miraculous movements that had succeeded in overcoming much better armed opponents. He likened his method to the cultivation of yogic practices by Rama in the *Ramayana*, who, so equipped, had been able to defeat the fearsome demon Ravana with his diminutive monkey army. Armed only with *satyagraha*, Gandhi claimed, "we can conquer our conquerors . . . [and] make them bow before our tremendous soul-force." "It is," he continued, "our *Kamadhenu* (mythical magical cow that granted all wishes). . . . Like air, *satyagraha* is all surrounding. It is infective," and thus infused *satyagrahis* could "not [be] subdued by physical force" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:2.9.17., 522–24). In his 1909 article "Magic Power of *Satyagraha*," he suggested that a *satyagrahi* who practiced sufficiently strict *tapasya* would be assured of "divine help" (8:5.6.09., 240).

At other times . . . his rhetoric recalled that of such millenarian anti-colonial movements as the Boxers in China. Supported by the spirit power of *satyagraha*, he assured his followers, they would know "how to die and stand [their] ground in a hail of bullets" (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:16.2.16., 295). According to Gandhi, the *satyagrahi* was capable of almost unimaginable acts of bravery far exceeding those of conventional soldiers, citing "world-known passive resisters who deliberately walked into funeral pyres

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or into boiling cauldrons" (Gandhi 1986, 1:21.5.10., 300). He also compared them to the Moroccan Muslims, who, he insisted, had held back the better armed French forces with "soul-power": "Reckless of their lives, they advanced running towards the French guns with cries of 'Yah Allah' and the French, overwhelmed by this display had refused to fire and ran to embrace the brave Arabs with shouts of joy" (3:2.9.17., 51). Indeed, Gandhi argued, it was less the warrior ethic of Islam than its self-sacrificing and self-immolating fakirs that had made it great (Gandhi 1958–84, 13:2.9.17., 518). There were no limits to the power of *satyagraha* "except those placed by the Satyagrahis capacity for *tapascharya*, for voluntary self-suffering." "*Ahimsa*," he declared, is "truly the panacea for all evils" (13:16.2.16., 295).

V

The martial basis of Gandhi's thought not only makes sense of many of his discussions of *satyagraha*, but also helps to explain his frequent endorsement of violence itself, which historians have found so puzzling. For Gandhi's primary objective was the creation of a martial nation, and as he made clear on several occasions, if violence was needed to create that courageous martial culture, then so be it.

He made his view explicit during World War I, when, as in South Africa, he pursued his project of making Indians soldiers, and became a recruiting sergeant. At the time and subsequently he defended his actions on the ground that Indians were too cowardly to practice nonviolence properly and needed to learn bravery before they could become effective *satyagrahis*. "I have always advised young Indians to join the army. India must know how to fight" (Gandhi 1958–84, 14: 30.6.18., 452), he said, and "by joining the army we shall become brave and we shall learn something about the handling of arms," while rekindling the spirit of patriotism (14:22.6.18., 498). Though he ultimately preferred nonviolence, he also conceded that Indians "will not regain this fearless spirit until they have received the training to defend themselves" (14:6.7.18., 476). And even after the Great War was over, he was still advocating training in arms for those who wanted it, claiming he preferred that Indians should resort to arms than relapse into cowardice (18:11.7.20., 131). Indians were also ill-disciplined and divided, and a stint of active service in the imperial Indian army might, he thought, rectify these failings. So he exhorted fellow Gujaratis to learn military science from the British, especially drilling, because Indians "don't know how to walk properly, especially in squads or to keep step." Such knowledge, he argued "could be of great service in other aspects of life" (14:20.10.17., 29–30).

Gandhi, therefore, insisted that while nonviolence was the best strategy to adopt for those who had not mastered *satyagraha*, violence and killing was preferable to cowardice, and indeed might help to overcome that cowardice. So, in his commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* he explained that the text did not absolutely outlaw violence: "The *dharma* which it teaches does not mean that a person who has not yet awakened to . . . non-violence may act like a coward. . . . It does not under any circumstances countenance running away in fear. . . . Anyone who prepares to run away would be better instead to kill and be killed" (28:11.10.25., 320). Similarly, when asked by a group of merchants how they should defend themselves against dacoits (violent thieves), Gandhi insisted that:

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> Those who work for wealth and possessions must be ready to defend themselves. . . . One can defend oneself by soul force or by physical force. Anyone who has not cultivated soul force is duty bound to defend himself and his people by means of physical force. Both . . . will have to learn to face death. The man of soul-force will treat his body as of no worth and lay down his life without using force against the dacoits, whereas the other would die killing. (24:29.6.24., 318)

Remarkably, in 1926 he wrote that "even war" was better than "utter helplessness and unmanliness," going on to compare the Hindu-Muslim violence of the era as akin to late-medieval England's Wars of the Roses, "out of which will arise a mighty nation" (31:8.9.26., 368).

Moreover, Gandhi was determined that his "mighty nation" would be militarily strong, and he discussed the question of the military arrangements that would prevail in an independent Indian state with a succession of British official interlocutors. Though at times he claimed to want an army-free India and also talked vaguely of a non-violent police force, much of his diplomacy on this issue was far more conventional. During constitutional negotiations with the British, he was very conscious of the importance of maintaining, and indeed, of increasing India's military capacity. As late as the transfer of power negotiations of 1946, he assured the leading British negotiator, Stafford Cripps, that he was confident India's armed services could be sufficiently strong to guarantee protection to the newly incorporated princely states (94:3.4.46., 261). Meanwhile, at the second Round Table Conference talks on Indian constitutional reform held in 1931, the issue of control of the army was central to discussions, and Gandhi had very decided views on the issue: "When India decides to acquire military strength it will do so in no time," he declared. The problem was that the British had prevented military training and "both rulers and ruled must immediately repair the omission" (14:3.11.17., 52). In response to British arguments that it would endanger India's security to hand over control of its armed services to nationalists, he reminded them:

> India is not a nation which has never known how to defend itself. There is all the material there. There are the Mohammedans. . . . The Sikhs will refuse to think that they can be conquered by anybody. The Gurkha, immediately he develops the martial mind, will say, I alone can defend India. Then there are the Rajputs who are supposed to be responsible for a thousand Thermopylaes [*sic*]. . . . Do these people stand in need of learning the art of defence? (45:17.11.31., 303)

This was not the only expression of a conventional nationalist interest in a powerful military. He also asserted during his contribution to the armed-services debate that "defence, its army, is to a nation the very essence of its existence" (45:17.11.31., 307). And although he conceded in 1931 that "I know the army will not accept my command," he added, "but I expect even so, to exercise that command. . . . That is really my ambition, and therefore I say I would wait till eternity if I couldn't get hold of defence" (45:17.11.31., 307).

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VI

All of these statements suggest that Gandhi's concerns were those of many other Asian nationalists of the era—the need to build a powerful nation, imbued with martial virtues, to resist the imperialist West. He may have been unusual in rejecting violence, modern states, and industrial economies, but that did not affect this fundamental goal.

Gandhi always made it clear that these nationalist objectives, and not global peace, were his main concerns. He told European pacifists that they must "appreciate one vital difference between them and me. They do not represent exploited nations. I represent the most exploited nation on earth" (Gandhi 1986, 2:9.5.29., 471). Earlier the same year, he had argued that "it is one thing to adopt non-violence for a specific purpose in a time of crisis, and quite another thing to advocate its adoption by all for all time as a philosophy of life. . . . I lack the strength for such a mission" (2:10.1.29., 391).

Gandhi was therefore warning against a noncontextual interpretation of his thought, and one can make a great deal of sense of his ideas by understanding the late nineteenth-century global contexts of both militarism and Romantic anti-materialist thought, together with the local context of the Indian concept of *varna*. However, there is a fourth context that also casts light on his thought: the response of Asian nationalists to Western military dominance.

Among societies that perceived themselves as militarily disadvantaged, it seems hardly surprising that in the search for organizational resources and self-esteem nationalists would stress the notion of spiritual power as an alternative to military power and materialism, and would use Western Romantic thought to bolster it. The notion of "spirit" is also present in some Western nationalisms, notably German, but extreme anti-materialist and anti-technology sentiments, hostility to competitiveness, efforts to root a mobilizational politics in indigenous cultures, and an acutely voluntaristic sensibility were particularly characteristic of some varieties of Japanese and Chinese nationalism, as well as other non-Gandhian Indian nationalists such as Aurobindo Ghosh (Heehs 2008, 264–308).

One parallel to Gandhi's thought can be found in the philosophy of his near contemporary, the scholar and activist Liang Shu-ming. Liang's background was similar to Gandhi's, a declining service family, and his intellectual trajectory was very similar. Originally an advocate of modernization along Western lines of constitutional liberal advances, after the 1911 revolution he briefly advocated violent revolutionary action. He then underwent a crisis, which he identified as spiritual, and in 1921 published a comparison of Chinese and Western culture, *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, which is strikingly similar in its thesis and prescriptions to *Hind Swaraj*. Liang contrasted the materialism of the West with the ethical and spiritual virtues of ancient Confucian tradition; rejected Western-style modernization as materialistic, machine-dependent, and corrupting; and advocated the reconstruction of Chinese society along communitarian, agrarian, and nonviolent lines. The book was immensely popular among China's educated groups and, some have argued, seems to have reflected the sentiments of its "literate silent majority" (Alitto 1976, 213–41).

In the Japan of the early 1900s, nationalist thought had also begun to develop a sharp critique of Western materialism, industrialization, and competitiveness, having earlier sought to emulate these traits during the era of the Meiji Restoration. A direct

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contemporary of Gandhi, Gondo Seikei, in his 1936 work *Principles of Popular Self-Government*, cited the ancient authority of the sun goddess Amaterasu in support of his view that premodern agrarian mutualism was the basis of the virtuous society. Rejecting modern centralized and bureaucratic government, he called for a nonviolent popular organization inspired by self-sacrificing, heroic deeds to restore "the sacred sources" of Japanese life (Najita and Harootunian 1988, 722–25).

These thinkers were more hostile to the military than Gandhi, but closer parallels can be found in the writings of Okawa Shumei, a Japanese scholar-official and another near contemporary of Gandhi's. Okawa located national essence in the revival of the religious and philosophical traditions of Asia. Buddhism and Confucianism informed, he argued, an ethical perfection to be found in the spirit of the samurai-warrior caste. The Russo-Japanese War was for him, as for many Asian nationalists, a turning point in world history. Japan, he thought, would lead the way for other Asian nations and indeed all nations. He envisaged the melding of Asian religious thought and those aspects of Western ethical and spiritual thought—developed by Plato, Christ, and Emerson—which he thought functionally similar to those of the East, to create an ideal modern state (Najita and Harootunian 1988, 729–34).

Gandhi's valorization of the ethical and spiritual—like Okawa Shumei's—has something in common with that of the theorists of nonviolence of the 1990s and 2000s. But both thinkers' nationalism, and their admiration for the values of the military caste, are very distant from the concerns of today's nonviolent activists, as one would expect, given the world of colonialism and international competition in which they lived. While the Gandhi of the imagination may have had a positive influence on world politics in recent decades, it is important for scholars to distinguish the historical Gandhi in all his complexity from the iconic one.

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